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The Haunted House.

By Thomas Hood.

Illustrated by Herbert Railton.
Introduction by

GIFT

GIFT OF
Miss Frances M. Molera



THE HAUNTED HOUSE

A Romance

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

BY THOMAS HOOD ILLUSTRATED BY HERBERT RAILTON WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY AUSTIN DOBSON



LONDON: LAWRENCE AND BULLEN
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INTRODUCTION

The Haunted House is pathetically connected with the close of its author's life. It belongs to the period comprised in the final pages of those simple and unaffected Memorials by his son and daughter, which—until, from the pen of the Master of the Temple or some one equally capable, we are furnished with an ampler and a more critical biography—must remain the chief record of Thomas Hood. It was in the May of 1845 that he died; and *The Haunted House* was probably composed in the last months

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of 1843, when he was already a doomed man, though still struggling gallantly, in spite of everything, to carry on his literary pursuits. Already, for several years past, his condition had been more or less critical. He suffered from heart disease, and periodic hæmorrhage of the lungs, combined with minor ailments; all of which, according to his faithful friend and physician, Dr. William Elliot, had been aggravated by the necessity that he should, in all circumstances and "at all times continue his literary labours, being under engagements to complete certain works within a stated period." In the train of insomnia had come its attendant troubles, depression and exhaustion, and these

again had increased his malady, "bringing on renewed attacks, and reducing him to such a state that he had been rendered utterly incapable of mental effort." These quotations are from a letter of 1840, but they represent with even more accuracy his condition in 1843. Yet his endurance, his courage, his buoyancy, and his cheerful spirit kept him active almost to the end. Several times during the progress of his last enterprise, his friends, of whom happily he seems to have had no lack, were obliged to make fresh excuses for the absence of his familiar pen. Now and then a little drawing, executed with difficulty in his sick bed, did duty for the defaulting pages of prose or verse; and many of

his later papers were dictated to his wife —that kind and loving nurse who for so brief a space survived her husband —in the intervals of terrible paroxysms of pain. The moment he could return to work he did so, pouring out his "whims and oddities," scrawling off admirable letters to childish favourites, or drawing up eloquent appeals to those in power on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. And strangely enough, to this period of his life belong not only *The Haunted House*, but two more of his most successful and enduring poetical efforts, *The Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs*.

The Song of the Shirt came out anonymously in the Christmas Number

of *Punch* for 1843, and its instantaneous and extraordinary popularity is matter of history. But *The Haunted House* and *The Bridge of Sighs* both appeared in that ill-starred and short-lived serial *Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany.* The three volumes of this are now so rarely to be found, and it is, moreover, so intimately connected with its Editor's final struggle with that "long disease," his life, that before proceeding to the main duty of this "Introduction," it may be worth while to give some account of it. A periodical which, in addition to the beautiful *Stanzas*—"Farewell, Life! My senses swim," includes, not only two of Hood's best pieces, but half a dozen of

Robert Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Romances*, two or three poems by Keats, a poem and a conversation by Walter Savage Landor, and contributions by Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), "Barry Cornwall" (B. W. Procter), the Hon. Mrs. Norton, G. H. Lewes, and G. P. R. James,—to say nothing of a humorous epistle from Charles Dickens,—scarcely deserves to fall into complete oblivion. Its prospectus, which was issued at the end of 1843, was in Hood's best manner, bristling of course with wit and puns, and betraying not the least indication of the writer's miserable state of health. There was to be a total abstinence from the stimulating topics and fermented ques-

tions of Politics and Polemics, it said, but "for the Sedate there would be papers of becoming gravity; and the lover of Poetry would be supplied with numbers in each Number." "It would aim at being merry and wise, instead of merry and otherwise." "A critical eye was to be kept on current Literature,—a regretful one on the Drama, and a kind one on the Fine Arts, from whose Artesian well there would be an occasional *drawing*."

More than half of the first number, which was published in January with, for those days, considerable success, (1,500 copies being sold), was contributed by Hood himself. The frontispiece was an exceedingly good steel engraving by J. Cousen, after Thomas Creswick,

R.A., of *The Haunted House;* and it is quite possible that the original picture, which, we are told, was never in Hood's possession, supplied the initial suggestion for the poem it was employed to decorate. There were other verses by the Editor in the first part, which also included a metrical description, by an anonymous hand, of Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*,—a description scarcely to be described as an improvement on Hoadly's contemporary verses. The start which the magazine obtained was, however, speedily obstructed by the usual financial difficulties. The proprietor turned out to be a man of straw, who had been tempted into the speculation by the Editor's name, but was without suf-

ficient capital to float the enterprise. After changing printers twice, Hood managed to get out the second number, which opened with another of his more serious poems, *The Lady's Dream*, —the title, by the way, of one of Stothard's water-colour designs in the William Smith Bequest at South Kensington. Hood's *Lady's Dream*, however, — notable for the couplet,

> " Evil is wrought by want of Thought
> As well as want of Heart,"—

was illustrated by himself, with some obvious assistance from its engraver, Samuel Williams, and it had also an exceedingly picturesque tail-piece of a " Church Porch," the " scene of *Gray's Elegy*," which, from the initials " T.C.,"

was apparently by Creswick. Among Hood's colleagues in this part were Charles Mackay and Mrs. S. C. Hall, the latter of whom had offered to assist out of "veneration to the author of the *Song of the Shirt*." In No. III. again, the initial poem, *The Key: a Moorish Romance*, was editorial; but the most ambitious contribution was a blank verse treatment by Mackay of that theme of the death of Pan which, in this same year, Mrs. Browning also handled so supremely.

Other "numbers in the Numbers" that succeeded were by Samuel Lover and the Hon. Mrs. Norton. In Part V., after a *Threatening Letter to Thomas Hood* from Dickens, came *The Bridge of*

Sighs and the beginning of the Editor's unfinished novel, *Our Family*. In the next part Browning arrived to the rescue with *The Laboratory* and *Claret* and *Tokay*, which two latter pieces (supplemented by *Beer*) figure in his works under the title of *Nationality in Drinks*. These contributions he afterwards followed up by *Garden Fancies*, *The Boy and the Angel*, *The Tomb at St. Praxed's*, and *The Flight of the Duchess*. Apparently this assistance was procured for the magazine by Milnes, to whose good offices is no doubt also due the song of *Old Meg*, which Keats was stated to have written during his tour in Scotland in 1818, and which made its first appearance in No. VI., heralding

one or two other minor pieces from the same pen. But before the first volume was finished, work and worry had again brought Hood to the brink of the grave. "During several days," says an announcement at the end of the number for June, "fears were entertained for his life." But he had rallied, and was recovering, though slowly,—in earnest of which he sent forth from his sick chamber two little sketches bearing unmistakable traces of the disadvantages under which they had been produced. One, *Hood's Mag*, was a magpie in a hawk's hood; the other, an "arrangement" of blisters, leeches, and physic bottles, symbolised and expressed *The Editor's Apologies.*

It is needless to describe in detail the contents of the two remaining volumes. Apart from Browning's poems, the most important of the pieces that followed were Landor's *Prayer of the Bees for Alciphron*, and the dialogue (in prose) between Dante and Beatrice, while in the number for November, 1844, figured a *Death of Clytemnestra* by Bulwer Lytton, also but recently recovered from illness. *Our Family* dragged on to its twenty-third chapter; but with the exception of the *Lay of the Labourer* and the stanzas beginning "Farewell, Life!" already referred to, nothing else of importance came from the Editor himself. His last prose contribution was a *Note from my Note Book*, in which he called

attention to the curious fact that Collins's *Ode to Evening* is but one unbroken sentence; his last metrical effort, a not very remarkable epigram on Lord Brougham. This latter appeared in the March number of Vol. II., the frontispiece to which was the engraving by F. A. Heath (familiar in the old editions of Hood's poems) of his bust by Edward Davis. The same March number announced that he was "more seriously ill than even *he* had ever been before." In April the hopeless character of his malady was definitely announced. He lingered, however, for a month longer, dying, as he said, "inch by inch," but tranquil, resigned, and affectionate as of old. The end came at last on the 3rd of May, 1845.

It has already been hinted that *The Haunted House* may have been first prompted by Creswick's picture, for which the artist's name was no doubt the same. Indeed, the motto from Wordsworth prefixed to the poem is just such an one as might be expected in an Exhibition Catalogue. But even if this conjecture be well founded, the result is only to increase one's sense of the extraordinary fertility of fancy which has accumulated around a suggestive title such a succession of images of solitude and decay,—such a brooding horror of ancestral crime and desolation. It is true that to-day the manner of the work is a little in the melodramatic taste of the forties and

fifties, but it is not the less ghostly on that account. And in this connection, it may be observed that an acute and accomplished critic of poetry, the poet Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, has been careful to notice a certain similarity between Hood's method in verse and some of Dickens's cognate pictures in prose. Mr. Stedman instances, for example, the touch of kinship between the old Hall in *The Haunted House* and "the shadowy grand-staircase in the Dedlock mansion" or "Mr. Tulkinghorn's chamber [in Lincoln's Inn Fields],—where the Roman points through loneliness and gloom to the dead body on the floor." Dickens had no need to borrow from any one; but, as we have seen, he had

himself contributed to *Hood's Magazine*, and it may well be that something of its opening verses had lingered in his memory, though there are ten years between them and the publication of *Bleak House* in 1853. But in recalling Mr. Stedman's attractive pages, we must not forget that the most steadfast admirer of this poem—upon which the sympathetic pencil of Mr. HERBERT RAILTON has here lavished its wealth of ingenious interpretation—was also an American poet and critic. It is to *The Haunted House* that Edgar Allan Poe devotes the entire final paragraph of his review of Hood. In all probability no more keenly perceptive analyst of this particular effort could be found than

the author of *The Raven*, and for this reason we shall take leave to close this preface by quoting his "appreciation" with a minimum of excision. After saying that he prefers *The Haunted House* to any composition of its author, he goes on: "It is a masterpiece of its kind—and that kind belongs to a very lofty—if not to the very loftiest order of poetical literature. . . . Not the least merit of the work is its rigorous simplicity. . . . The thesis is one of the truest in all poetry. *As* a mere thesis it is really difficult to conceive anything better. The strength of the poet is put forth in the invention of traits in keeping with the ideas of crime, abandonment, and ghostly visitation. Every legitimate art is brought in

to aid in conveying the intended effects; and (what is quite remarkable in the case of Hood) nothing discordant is at any point introduced. He has here very little of what we have designated as the fantastic—little which is not strictly harmonious. The metre and rhythm are not only in themselves admirably adapted to the whole design, but, with a true artistic feeling, the poet has preserved a thorough monotone throughout, and renders its effect more impressive by the repetition (gradually increasing in frequency towards the *finale*) of one of the most pregnant and effective of the stanzas:

> 'O'e all there hung a shadow and a fear,
> A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
> And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
> The place is Haunted!'

Had Hood only written *The Haunted House*, it would have sufficed to render him immortal."

AUSTIN DOBSON.

EALING, *August*, 1895.

The Haunted Houſe

The Haunted Houſe

A Romance

Part I

Some dreams we have are nothing elſe but dreams,
Unnatural, and full of contradictions;
Yet others of our moſt romantic ſchemes
Are ſomething more than fictions.

It might be only on enchanted ground;
It might be merely by a thought's expanſion;
But, in the ſpirit or the fleſh, I found
An old deſerted Manſion.

A reſidence for woman, child, and man,
A dwelling place,—and yet no habitation;
A Houſe,—but under some prodigious ban
Of Excommunication.

Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,
Jarr'd by the guſty gales of many winters,
That from its crumbled pedeſtal had flung
One marble globe in splinters.

No dog was at the threſhold, great or small;
No pigeon on the roof—no houſehold creature—
No cat demurely dozing on the wall—
Not one domeſtic feature.

No human figure ſtirr'd, to go or come,
No face looked forth from ſhut or open caſement;
No chimney ſmoked—there was no ſign of Home
From parapet to baſement.

With ſhatter'd panes the graſſy court was ſtarr'd:
The time-worn coping-ſtone had tumbled after!
And thro' the ragged roof the ſky ſhone, barr'd
With naked beam and rafter.

O'er all there hung a ſhadow and a fear;
A ſenſe of myſtery the ſpirit daunted,
And ſaid, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

The Haunted Houſe

The flow'r grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roſes with thiſtles struggled for eſpial,
And vagrant plants of paraſitic breed,
Had overgrown the Dial.

But gay or gloomy, steaafaſt or infirm,
No heart was there to heed the hour's duration;
All times and tides were loſt in one long term
Of stagnant deſolation.

The wren had built within the Porch, she found
Its quiet loneline/s so sure and thorough;
And on the lawn,—within its turfy mound,—
The rabbit made his burrow.

The rabbit wild and grey, that flitted thro'
The ſhrubby clumps, and friſk'd, and ſat, and vaniſh'd
But leiſurely and bold, as if he knew
His enemy was baniſh'd.

The wary crow,—the pheaſant from the woods—
Lull'd by the ſtill and everlaſting ſameneſs,
Cloſe to the manſion, like domeſtic broods,
Fed with a "ſhocking tameneſs."

The coot was ſwimming in the reedy pond,
Beſide the water-hen, ſo ſoon affrighted;
And in the weedy moat the heron, fond
Of ſolitude, alighted.

The moping heron, motionleſs and ſtiff,
That on a ſtone, as ſilently and ſtilly,
Stood, an apparent ſentinel, as if
To guard the water-lily.

No ſound was heard except, from far away,
The ringing of the witwall's ſhrilly laughter,
Or, now and then, the chatter of the jay,
That Echo murmur'd after.

But Echo never mock'd the human tongue;
Some weighty crime that Heaven could not pardon,
A ſecret curſe on that old Building hung
And its deſerted Garden.

The beds were all untouch'd by hand or tool;
No footſtep mark'd the damp and moſſy gravel,
Each walk as green as is the mantled pool,
For want of Human travel.

The vine unpruned, and the neglected peach,
Droop'd from the wall with which they used to grapple;
And on the kanker'd tree, in eaſy reach,
Rotted the golden apple.

But awfully the truant ſhunn'd the ground,
The vagrant kept aloof, and daring poacher,
In ſpite of gaps that thro' the fences round
Invited the encroacher.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A senſe of myſtery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

The pear and quince lay squander'd on the graſs;
The mould was purple with unheeded showers
Of bloomy plums—a Wilderneſs it was
Of fruits, and weeds, and flowers!

The marigold amidſt the nettles blew,
The gourd embraced the roſe-buſh in its ramble;
The thiſtle and the stock together grew,
The hollyhock and bramble.

The bear-bine with the lilac interlaced,
The sturdy burdock choked its slender neighbour,
The spicy pink. All tokens were effaced
Of human care and labour.

The very yew Formality had train'd
To such a rigid pyramidal stature,
For want of trimming had almoſt regain'd
The raggedneſs of nature.

The Fountain was a-dry—neglect and time
Had marr'd the work of artiſan and maſon,
And efts and croaking frogs, begot of slime,
Sprawl'd in the ruin'd baſon.

The Statue, fallen from its marble baſe,
Amidſt the refuſe leaves, and herbage rotten,
Lay like the Idol of some bygone race,
Its name and rites forgotten.

On ev'ry side the aſpect was the same,
All ruin'd, deſolate, forlorn and savage:
No hand or foot within the precinct came
To rectify or ravage.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A senſe of myſtery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

Part II

O very gloomy is the Houſe of Woe,
Where tears are falling while the bell is knelling,
With all the dark ſolemnities which ſhow
That Death is in the dwelling.

O very, very dreary is the room
Where Love, domeſtic Love, no longer neſtles,
But, ſmitten by the common ſtroke of doom,
The Corpſe lies on the treſtles!

But House of Woe, and hearſe, and ſable pall,
The narrow home of the departed mortal,
Ne'er look'd ſo gloomy as that Ghoſtly Hall,
With its deſerted portal!

The centipede along the threſhold crept,
The cobweb hung acroſs in mazy tangle,
And in its winding sheet the maggot slept,
At every nook and angle.

The keyhole lodged the earwig and her brood,
The emmets of the steps had old poſſeſſion,
And march'd in search of their diurnal food
In undiſturb'd proceſſion.

As undiſturb'd as the prehenſile cell
Of moth or maggot, or the spider's tiſſue,
For never foot upon that threſhold fell,
To enter or to iſſue.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A senſe of myſtery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

Howbeit, the door I puſh'd—or so I dream'd—
Which slowly, slowly gaped,—the hinges creaking
With such a rusty eloquence, it seem'd
That Time himſelf was speaking.

But Time was dumb within the Manſion old,
Or left his tale to the heraldic banners,
That hung from the corroded walls, and told
Of former men and manners :—

Thoſe tatter'd flags, that with the open'd door,
Seem'd the old wave of battle to remember,
While fallen fragments danced upon the floor,
Like dead leaves in December.

The startled bats flew out,—bird after bird,
The screech-owl overhead began to flutter,
And seem'd to mock the cry that she had heard
Some dying victim utter!

A shriek that echo'd from the joiſted roof,
And up the stair, and further still and further,
Till in some ringing chamber far aloof
It ceaſed its tale of murther!

Meanwhile the ruſty armour rattled round,
The banner ſhudder'd, and the ragged ſtreamer;
All things the horrid tenor of the ſound
Acknowledged with a tremor.

The antlers, where the helmet hung, and belt,
Stirr'd as the tempeſt ſtirs the foreſt branches,
Or as the ſtag had trembled when he felt
The bloodhound at his haunches.

The window jingled in its crumbled frame,
And thro' its many gaps of deſtitution
Dolorous moans and hollow ſighings came,
Like thoſe of diſſolution.

The woodlouſe dropp'd, and roll'd into a ball,
Touch'd by some impulſe occult or mechanic;
And nameleſs beetles ran along the wall
In univerſal panic.

The subtle spider, that from overhead
Hung like a spy on human guilt and error,
Suddenly turn'd and up its slender thread
Ran with a nimble terror.

The very stains and fractures on the wall
Aſſuming features solemn and terrific,
Hinted some Tragedy of that old Hall,
Lock'd up in hieroglyphic.

Some tale that might, perchance, have ſolved the doubt,
Wherefore amongſt thoſe flags ſo dull and livid,
The banner of the Bloody Hand *ſhone out*
So ominouſly vivid.

Some key to that inſcrutable appeal,
Which made the very frame of Nature quiver;
And every thrilling nerve and fibre feel
So ague-like a ſhiver.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A ſenſe of myſtery. the ſpirit daunted;
And ſaid, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

If but a rat had linger'd in the houſe,
To lure the thought into a social channel!
But not a rat remain'd, or tiny mouſe,
To squeak behind the panel.

Huge drops roll'd down the walls, as if they wept;
And where the cricket uſed to chirp so shrilly,
The toad was squatting, and the lizard crept
On that damp hearth and chilly.

For years no cheerful blaze had sparkled there,
Or glanced on coat of buff or knightly metal;
The slug was crawling on the vacant chair,—
The snail upon the settle.

The floor was redolent of mould and muſt,
The fungus in the rotten ſeams had quicken'd;
While on the oaken table coats of duſt
Perennially had thicken'd.

No mark of leathern jack or metal can,
No cup—no horn—no hoſpitable token,—
All ſocial ties between that board and Man
Had long ago been broken.

There was ſo foul a rumour in the air,
The ſhadow of a preſence ſo atrocious:
No human creature could have feaſted there,
Even the moſt ferocious.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A ſenſe of myſtery the ſpirit daunted,
And ſaid, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

Part III

'Tis hard for human actions to account,
Whether from reason or from impulse only—
But some internal prompting bade me mount
The gloomy stairs and lonely.

Those gloomy stairs, so dark, and damp, and cold,
With odours as from bones and relics carnal,
Deprived of right, and consecrated mould,
The chapel vault or charnel.

Thoſe dreary ſtairs, where with the ſounding ſtreſs
Of ev'ry ſtep ſo many echoes blended,
The mind, with dark miſgivings, feared to gueſs
How many feet aſcended.

The tempeſt with its ſpoils had drifted in,
Till each unwholeſome ſtone was darkly ſpotted,
As thickly as the leopard's dappled ſkin,
With leaves that rankly rotted.

The air was thick—and in the upper gloom
The bat—or ſomething in its ſhape—was winging;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb,
The Death's-Head moth was clinging.

That myſtic moth, which, with a senſe profound
Of all unholy preſence, augurs truly ;
And with a grim significance flits round
The taper burning bluely.

Such omens in the place there seem'd to be,
At ev'ry crooked turn, or on the landing,
The straining eyeball was prepared to see
Some Apparition standing.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A senſe of myſtery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

Yet no portentous Shape the ſight amazed;
Each object plain, and tangible, and valid;
But from their tarniſh'd frames dark Figures gazed,
And Faces ſpectre-pallid.

Not merely with the mimic life that lies
Within the compaſs of Art's ſimulation;
Their ſouls were looking thro' their painted eyes
With awful ſpeculation.

On ev'ry lip a ſpeechleſs horror dwelt;
On ev'ry brow the burthen of affliction;
The old Anceſtral Spirits knew and felt
The Houſe's malediction.

Such earneſt woe their features overcaſt,
They might have ſtirr'd, or ſigh'd, or wept, or ſpoken;
But, ſave the hollow moaning of the blaſt,
The ſtillness was unbroken.

No other ſound or ſtir of life was there,
Except my ſteps in ſolitary clamber,
From flight to flight, from humid ſtair to ſtair,
From chamber into chamber.

Deſerted rooms of luxury and ſtate,
That old magnificence had richly furniſh'd
With pictures, cabinets of ancient date,
And carvings gilt and burniſh'd.

Rich hangings, storied by the needle's art
With Scripture hiſtory, or claſſic fable;
But all had faded, save one ragged part,
Where Cain was slaying Abel.

The silent waſte of mildew and the moth
Had marr'd the tiſſue with a partial ravage;
But undecaying frown'd upon the cloth
Each feature stern and savage.

The sky was pale; the cloud a thing of doubt;
Some hues were freſh, and some decay'd and duller:
But still the Bloody Hand *shone strangely out*
With vehemence of colour!

The Bloody Hand *that with a lurid ſtain*
Shone on the duſty floor, a diſmal token,
Projected from the caſement's painted pane,
Where all beſide was broken.

The Bloody Hand *ſignificant of crime,*
That glaring on the old heraldic banner,
Had kept its crimſon unimpaired by time,
In ſuch a wondrous manner.

O'er all there hung the ſhadow of a fear,
A ſenſe of myſtery the ſpirit daunted,
And ſaid, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

The Death Watch tick'd behind the panell'd oak,
Inexplicable tremors shook the arras,
And echoes ſtrange and myſtical awoke,
The fancy to embarraſs.

Prophetic hints that fill'd the ſoul with dread,
But thro' one gloomy entrance pointing moſtly,
The while ſome ſecret inſpiration ſaid,
That Chamber is the Ghoſtly!

Acroſs the door no goſſamer feſtoon
Swung pendulous—no web—no dusty fringes,
No ſilky chryſalis or white cocoon
About its nooks and hinges.

The ſpider ſhunn'd the interdicted room,
The moth, the beetle, and the fly were baniſh'd,
And where the ſunbeam fell athwart the gloom
The very midge had vaniſh'd.

One lonely ray that glanced upon a Bed,
As if with awful aim direct and certain,
To ſhow the Bloody Hand *in burning red*
Embroidered on the curtain.

And yet no gory ſtain was on the quilt—
The pillow in its place had ſlowly rotted;
The floor alone retain'd the trace of guilt,
Thoſe boards obſcurely ſpotted.

Obſcurely ſpotted to the door, and thence
With mazy doubles to the grated caſement—
Oh what a tale they told of fear intenſe,
Of horror and amazement!

What human creature in the dead of night
Had courſed like hunted hare that cruel diſtance?
Had ſought the door, the window in his flight,
Striving for dear exiſtence?

What ſhrieking Spirit in that bloody room
Its mortal frame had violently quitted?—
Acroſs the ſunbeam, with a ſudden gloom,
A ghoſtly Shadow flitted.

Acroſs the sunbeam, and along the wall,
But painted on the air so very dimly,
It hardly veil'd the tapeſtry at all,
Or portrait frowning grimly.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A senſe of myſtery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whiſper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

The Haunted House

A Romance by Thomas Hood

The Illustrations by
Herbert Railton.

The Introduction by
Aylin Dobson.



PART. I.



The HAUNTED HOUSE

A Romance

PART I

Some dreams we have are nothing else but dreams,
Unnatural, and full of contradictions;
Yet others of our most romantic schemes
Are something more than fictions.



t might be only on enchanted ground;
It might be merely by a thought's expansion;
But, in the spirit or the flesh, I found
An old deserted Mansion.

A residence for woman, child, and man,
A dwelling-place, – and yet no habitation;
A House, – but under some prodigious ban
Of Excommunication.



Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,
Tarr'd by the sixty sales of many winters.
That from its crumbled pedestal had flung
One marble globe in splinters.



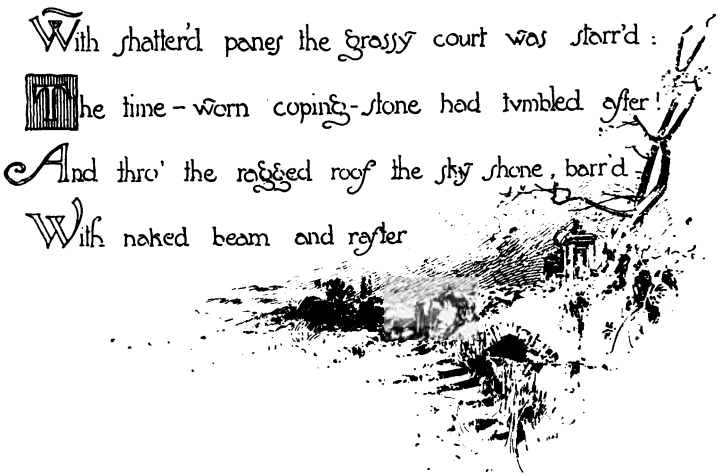
No dog was at the threshold, great or small;
No pigeon on the roof — no household creature —
No cat demurely dozing on the wall —
Not one domestic feature




Within fled the iron
Gates' half open hours

No human figure stirr'd to go or come,
No face look'd forth from shut or open casement;
No chimney smoked — there was no sign of Home
From parapet to basement.

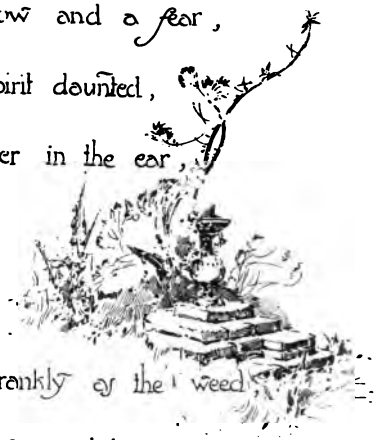
With shatter'd panes the grassy court was starr'd:
The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled ayter!
And thro' the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd
With naked beam and rayter



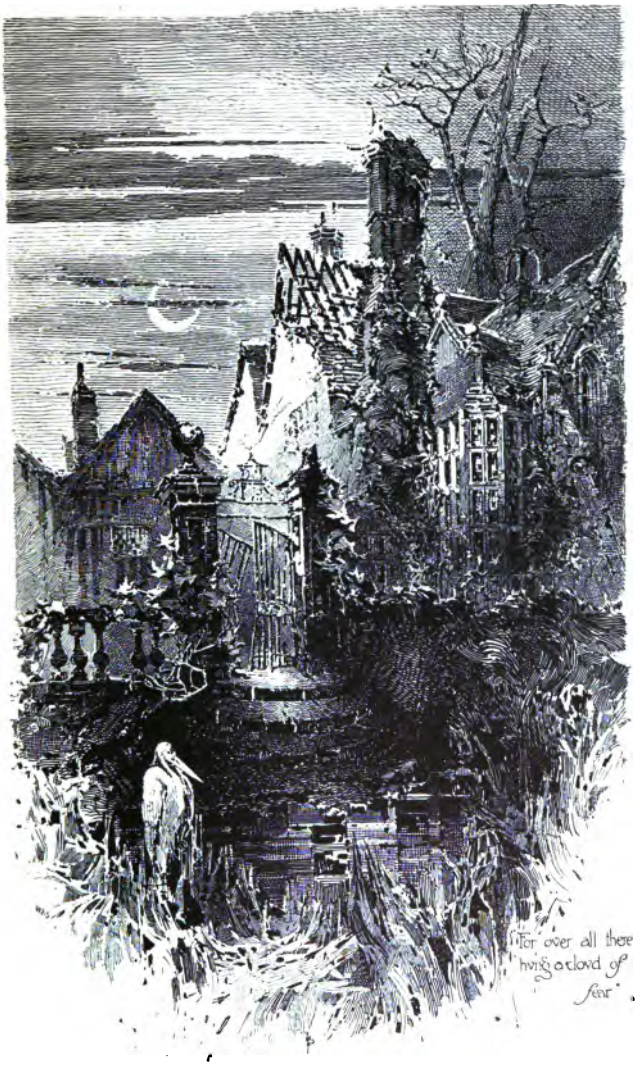


No chimney smoked –
there was no sign of Home.

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted.



The flow'r grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed,
Had overgrown the Dial.



"For over all there hung a cloud of fear."

But gay or gloomy, steadfast or infirm,
No heart was there to heed the hour's duration;
All times and tides were lost in one long term
Of stagnant desolation.

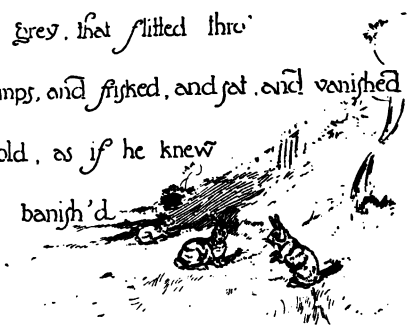


The wren had built within the porch; the sound
Its quiet loneliness so sure and thorough;
And on the lawn,— within its turfy mound,—
The rabbit made his burrow.



The wren had built within the Porch

The rabbit wild and grey, that flitted thro'
The shrubby clumps, and frisked, and sat, and vanished
But leisurely and bold, as if he knew
His enemy was banish'd



The wary crow,- the pheasant from the woods -
Lull'd by the still and everlasting sameness,
Close to the mansion, like domestic broods,
Fed with a "shocking tameness."

The coot was swimming in the reedy pond,
Beside the water-hen, so soon affrighted;
And in the weedy moat the heron, fond
Of solitude, alighted.



The moping heron, motionless and stiff,
That on a stone, as silently and stilly,
Stood, an apparent sentinel, as if
To guard the water-lily.


The moping heron,
melancholy and stiff."

No sound was heard except, from far away,
The ringing of the wittwall's shrilly laughter,
Or, now and then, the chatter of the jay,
That Echo murmer'd after.

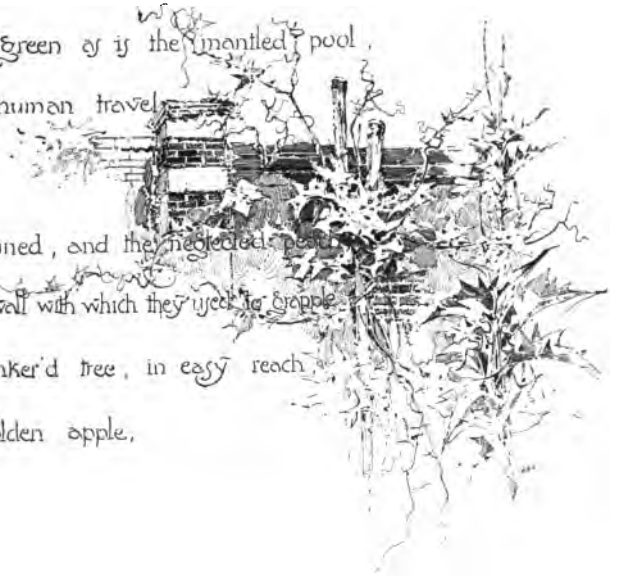




A secret curse on that old Building hung,
And its deserted Garden.

But Echo never mock'd the human tongue;
Some weighty crime, that Heaven could not pardon,
A secret curse on that old Building hung
And its deserted Garden.

The beds were all untouch'd by hand or tool;
No footsteps marked the damp and mossy gravel
Each walk as green as is the mantled pool,
For want of human travel.



The vine unpruned, and the neglected peach
Droop'd from the wall with which they us'ed to grapple,
And on the kanker'd tree, in easy reach,
Rotted the golden apple.

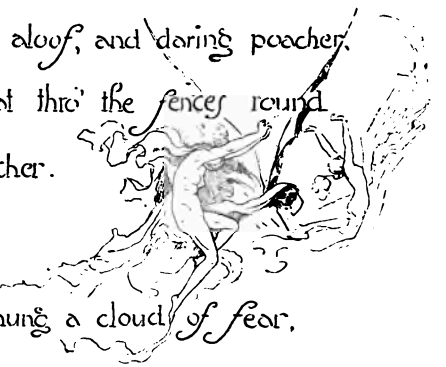
But awfully the truant shunn'd the ground,
The vagrant kept aloof, and daring poacher,
In spite of gaps that thro' the fences round
Invited the encroacher.



For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!


The flower grew wild
and rankly as the weed.

But awfully the truant shunn'd the ground,
The vagrant kept aloof, and daring poacher
In spite of gaps that thro' the fences round
Invited the encroacher.



For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!



The bear-bine with the lilac interlaced,
The sturdy bur-dock choked its slender neighbour;
The spicy pink. All tokens were effaced
Of human care and labour.

The very yew formality had train'd
To such a rigid pyramidal stature,
For want of trimming had almost regain'd
The raggedness of nature.




The Fountain was
a-dry.

The bear-bine with the lilac interlaced,
The sturdy bur-dock choked its slender neighbour;
The spicy pink. All tokens were effaced
Of human care and labour.



The very yew formality had train'd
To such a rigid pyramidal stature,
For want of trimming had almost regain'd
The raggedness of nature.

On ev'ry side the aspect was the same,
All ruin'd, desolate, forlorn and savage:
No hand or foot within the precinct came
To rectify or ravage.


The weedy moat

For over all there hung a cloud of fear.
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted.





The Statue, fallen from its marble base.



PART II.



PART III.

O very gloomy is the House of Woe,
Where tears are falling while the bell is knelling,
With all the dark solemnities which show
That Death is in the dwelling.

O very, very dreary is the room
Where Home, domestic Love, no longer nestles,
But, smitten by the common stroke of doom,
The Corpse lies on the trestles!

But House of Woe, and hearse, and sable pall,
The narrow home of the departed mortal,
Ne'er look'd so gloomy as that Ghostly Hall,
With its deserted portal



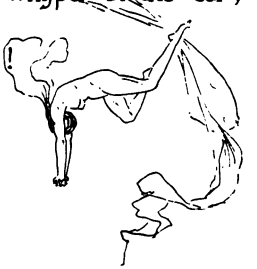
The centipede along the threshold crept,
The cobweb hung across in mazy tangle,
And in its winding sheet the maggot slept,
At every nook and angle

The keyhole lodged the earwig and her brood,
The emmets of the steps had sole possession,
And marched in search of their diurnal food
In undisturbed procession

As undisturb'd as the prehensile cell
Of moth or maggot, or the spider's tissue,
For never foot upon that threshold fell,
To enter or to issue.



O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!





"For never foot upon that threshold fell."

Nowbeit, the door I push'd — or so I dream'd —
Which slowly, slowly gaped, — the hinges creaking
With such a rusty eloquence, it seemed
That Time himself was speaking



But Time was dumb within that Mansion old
Or left his tale to the heraldic banners,
That hung from the corroded walls, and told
Of former men and manners.

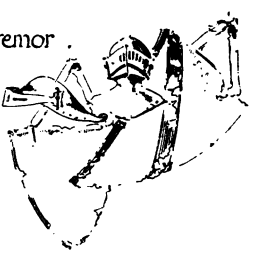
Those tatter'd flags, that with the open'd door,
Seem'd the old wave of battle to remember,
While fallen fragments danced upon the floor,
Like dead leaves in December

The startled bats flew out, — bird after bird,
The screech-owl overhead began to flutter,
And seemed to mock the cry that she had heard
Some dying victim utter!

A shriek that echo'd from the joisted roof,
And up the stair, and further still and further,
Till in some ringing chamber far aloof
It ceased its tale of murther!



Meanwhile the rusty armour rattled round,
The banner shudder'd, and the ragged streamer,
All things the horrid tenor of the sound
Acknowledged with a tremor.



The antlers, where the helmet hung, and belt,
Stirr'd as the tempest stirs the forest branches,
Or as the stag had trembled as he felt
The bloodhound at his haunches.

The window jingled in its crumbled frame,
And thro' its many gaps of destitution,
Dolorous moans and hollow sighings came,
Like those of dissolution.





No human figure stirr'd,
to Go or come,
No face look'd forth
from shut or open casement.

The wood-louse dropped, and rolled into a ball.
Touch'd by some impulse occult or mechanic;
And nameless beetles ran along the wall,
In universal panic



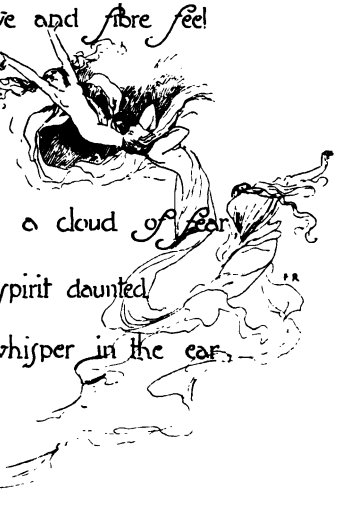
The subtle spider, that from overhead
Hung like a spy on human guilt and error,
Suddenly turn'd and up its slender thread
Ran with a nimble terror

The very stains and fractures on the wall
Assuming features solemn and terrific,
Painted some Tragedy of that old Hall,
Locked up in hieroglyphic

Some tale that might, perchance, have solved the doubt,
Wherefore amongst those flags so dull and livid,
The banner of the BLOODY HAND shone out
So ominously vivid.

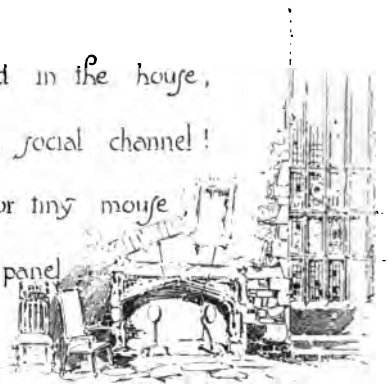


Some key to that inscrutable appeal,
Which made the very frame of Nature quiver;
And every thrilling nerve and fibre feel
So ague-like a shiver.



For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, or plain or whisper in the ear,—
The place is Haunted.

If but a rat had linger'd in the house,
To lure the thought into a social channel!
But not a rat remain'd or tiny mouse,
To squeak behind the panel.



Huge drops roll'd down the walls as if they wept;
And where the cricket used to chirp so shrilly,
The toad was squatting, and the lizard crept
On that damp hearth and chilly

For years no cheerful blaze had sparkled there,
Or glanced on coat of buff or knightly metal;
The slug was crawling on the vacant chair,
The snail upon the settle.



The floor was redolent of mould and must;
The fungus in the rotten seams had quicken'd;
While on the oaken table coats of dust
Perennially had thicken'd.



Fer years no cheerful blaze
had sparkled there

No mark of leathern jack or metal can,
No cup — no horn — no hospitable token,—
All social ties between that beard and Man
Had long ago been broken.

There was so foul a rumour in the air,
The shadow of a presence so atrocious:
No human creature could have feasted there.
Even the most ferocious

No mark of leathern jack or metal can,
No cup — no horn — no hospitable token,—
All social ties between that board and Man
Had long ago been broken . .

There was so foul a rumour in the air,
The shadow of a presence so atrocious:
No human creature could have feasted there.
Even the most ferocious



For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted.
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!



PART III.



'Tis hard for human actions to account
Whether from reason or from impulse only. –
But some internal prompting bade me mount
The gloomy stairs and lonely

Those gloomy stairs, so dark, so damp, so cold
With odours as from bones and relics carnal,
Deprived of right and consecrated mould,
The chapel vault and charnel



These gloomy stairs, so dark,
so damp, so cold.



Those dreary stairs, where with the [illegible] dress
Of every step so many echoes blended
The mind, with dark misgivings, feared to guess
How many feet ascended.

The tempest with its spoils had drifted in,
Till each unwholesome stone was darkly spotted
As thickly as the leopard's dappled skin,
With leaves that rankly rotted

The air was thick — and in the upper gloom
The bat — or something in its shape — was winging;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb
The Death's-Head moth was clinging

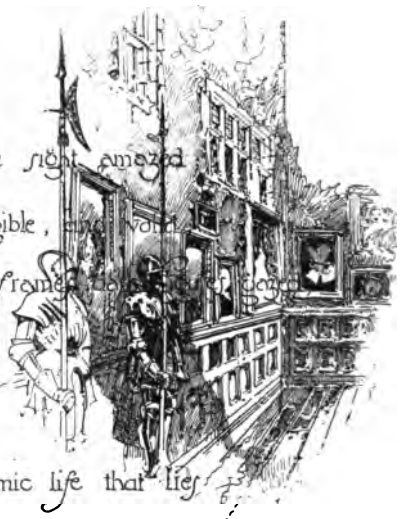
That mystic moth, which, with a sense half blind
Of all unholy presence, augurs truly
And with a grim significance flits round
The taper burning bluely



Such omens in the place there seem'd to be,
At ev'ry crooked turn, or on the landing,
The straining eyeball was prepared to see
Some Apparition standing.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted.





Yet no portentous Shape the sight amazed.
Each object plain, and tangible, [illegible]
But from their tarnish'd frames [illegible]
And Faces spectre-pallid.

Not merely with the mimic life that lies
Within the compass of Art's simulation;
Their souls were looking thro' their painted eyes
With awful speculation.

On evry lip a speechless horror dwelt;
On evry brow the burthen of affliction,
The old Ancestral Spirits knew [illegible]
The Rowe's malediction



Such earnest woe their features overcast,
They might have stirr'd, or sigh'd, or wept, or spoken;
But, save the hollow moaning of the blast,
The stillness was unbroken.



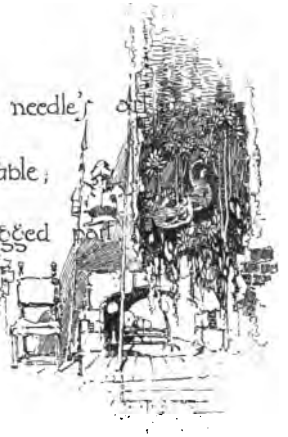
Deserted rooms of luxury and state.

No other sound or stir of life was there
Except my steps in solitary clamber,
From flight to flight, from humid stair to stair,
From chamber into chamber



Deserted rooms of luxury and state,
That old magnificence had richly furnish'd
With pictures cabinets of ancient date,
And carvings gilt and burnish'd

Rich hangings, storied by the needle's art
With Scripture history, or classic fable;
But all had faded, save one ragged part
Where Cain was slaying Abel.



The silent waste of mildew and the moth
Had marr'd the tissue with a partial ravage;
But undecaying frown'd upon the cloth
Each feature stern and savage

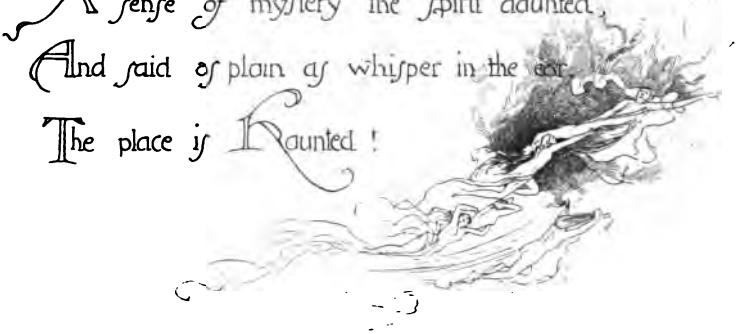
The sky was pale; the cloud a thing of doubt;
Some hues were fresh, and some decay'd and duller
But still the **Bloody Hand** shone strangely out
With vehemence of colour!

The **Bloody Hand** that with a lurid flair
Shone on the dusty floor, a dismal token,
Projected from the casement's painted pane,
Where all beside was broken



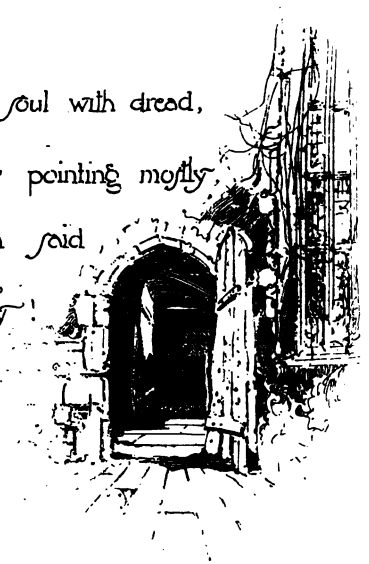
The **Bloody Hand** significant of crime,
That glaring on the old heraldic banner,
Had kept its crimson unimpaired by time,
In such a wonderous manner.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear.
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!



The Death Watch tick'd behind the panell'd oak,
Inexplicable tremors shook the arras,
And echoes strange and mystical awoke,
The fancy to embarrass.

Prophetic hints that fill'd the soul with dread,
But thro' one gloomy entrance pointing mostly,
The while some secret inspiration said,
That Chamber is The Ghostly!





But thro' one
gloomy entrance

Across the door no gossamer festoon
Swung pendulous — no web — no dusty fringes
No silky chrysalis or white cocoon
About its nooks and hinges



The spider shunn'd the interdicted room,
The moth, the beetle, and the fly were banish'd,
And where the sunbeam fell athwart the gloom
The very midge had vanish'd

One lonely ray that glanced upon a Bed,
As if with awful aim direct and certain
To show the *Bloody Hand* in burning red
Embroidered on the curtain





"One lonely ray that glanced upon a Bed."

And yet no gory stain was on the quilt—
The pillow in its place had slowly rotted;
The floor alone retain'd the trace of guilt,
Those boards obscurely spotted.

Obscurely spotted to the door, and thence
With mazy doubles to the grated casement.
Oh what a tale they told of fear intense
Of horror and amazement!



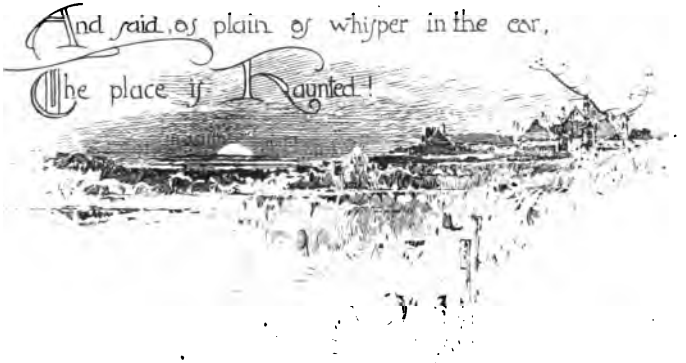
What human creature in the dead of night
Had coursed like hunted hare that cruel distance?
Had sought the door, the window in his flight,
Striving for dear existence?

What shrieking Spirit in that bloody room
Its mortal frame had violently quitted?
Across the sunbeam, with a sudden gloom
A ghostly shadow flitted.



Across the sunbeam, and along the wall,
But painted on the air so very dimly,
It hardly veil'd the tapestry at all,
Or portrait frowning grimly

Over all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!




The END

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